

The American Dream – Chapter 1 – The Premise

Since the beginning of time, humans have always fought; it's their nature. In fact it's in the nature of every living creature. Sometimes it was about 2 being trying to get the same prey, giving cause to the dispute. Other times, it was about one taking for another rather than get his own. When one talks of an animal that is easy to understand. But humans are supposed to be a higher species and shouldn't need to steal. A few thousand years ago, one group developed rules, attributed to their God, on the relationship that people should have.

"I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt..."

"You shall have no other gods besides Me... Do not make a sculpted image or any likeness of what is in the heavens above..."

"You shalt not swear falsely by the name of the Lord..."

"Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy"

"Honor your father and your mother..."

"You shall not murder"

"You shall not have sexual relations with another man's wife."

"You shall not kidnap"

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor"

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house..."

Remember, Moses was Jewish and the 10 Commandments were written in Hebrew. There are several versions of the rules, generally adaptations to conform to the various religious sects that developed out of Judaism. They are the same basic rules, regardless. Even when the Hebrews first got the new rules, there was controversy. And eventually from the controversy came hypocrisy.

Meanwhile, a new religious philosophy developed based on the teachings of a simple Jewish Carpenter. He was very special and gave mankind a new insight into their God. Martyred, his teachings took hold and the Christian religion became popular. Was He the Son of God? He said He was the Son of Man. Not important to the discussion.

In different places on the planet, other groups of people developed their own set of rules. And in the area where the rules shown above were first handed down, a split occurred and another set of rules were developed by a ruler cum latter day prophet. These were all spelled out in the Qur'an.

In the blink of an eye, the planet is about 4 billion years old; a new country came forth on the North American Continent. The Country called itself the United States of America. In the beginning, there were 13 states, but eventually there were 50 states and 14 territories. In the manner of governments, they wrote their own set of rules, called the Constitution.

The premier premise was embodied in the 10th Amendment, States Rights: The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people. To make certain that application of the Constitution remained fair, 2 provisions were made, the first an election process to replace the leaders from time to time and the second, a right of the individual as outlined in the 2nd Amendment: A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed. Interestingly, the Constitution contained no criminal laws except for treason.

In time, the new federal government found a way to create criminal laws; they used the Interstate Commerce Clause. During the early years of the new country, the central government was loath to create too many laws. However, times and people change and eventually the United States Code, Annotated, became a 4-volume set. Unfortunately, those were the laws; one needed a library to hold the volumes of regulations that implemented the laws.

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In a military sense, the US was powerful, haven beaten the British in the war for independence and again in 1812. There was something in the character of the American people that made them powerful warriors. They most generally won. And less than 100 years after the founding of the country a new war came, The Civil War, or to some, The War of Northern Aggression. In truth, that war was about economics, but it rent the new nation. Out of that war, came two distinct philosophies, that of the northeastern liberals and that of the remainder.

Every time one turned around the new country was involved in another war. Sometimes they won and sometimes it was a draw, but they never lost. Not until the '60s and the '70s. To its everlasting shame the country got involved in a war where it didn't belong and 10s of thousands of American lives later, quit. The criticism of American involvement in wars was worldwide, but when it came from home, the government was forced to capitulate.

The United States of America was an experiment; 235 years after the country was founded, it was still around and from a military standpoint, the most powerful nation in the world. The country had a good form of government, a Constitutional Republic. Many countries wanted to emulate that form of government or something very much like it. The problem was that the American experience was unique, partly because of the character of the American public, its citizens. When the country needed more land, they

bought it or stole it from the native inhabitants and it was the age of the industrial revolution. Technology allowed the Americans to overcome any other shortcomings.

At the dawn of the 21st Century, the world had become a hostile environment. Religious and ideological conflict was rampant and there were some who were more than willing to export their disagreements and philosophies abroad. Some 40-50 years earlier, an American Politician had written a paper entitled, "Democracy in Abundance". Herein, he explained why the American experiment couldn't be exported. The American circumstance, he explained, was unique. Democracy thrived because of the abundance. Still, at the dawn of the 21st Century, America was no longer the Land of Abundance and imported raw materials and finished goods from nearly every country on the planet.

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To protect its access to some of those raw materials, oil, the country had engaged in yet another war, this time in the Persian Gulf. The mere presence of American troops on the most scared land of those who subscribed to the religious philosophy of Islam as espoused in the Qur'an, gave rise to a new war, the War on Terror. One has to recall that within the Christian religion, barely 2,000 years old, there was widespread diversity and this was also the case with the Muslims whose religion was only 1,300-years old.

If that weren't enough, the industrial revolution had spawned an even larger problem, global warming. So the air was hot, big deal! But, it was a big deal, in 2005 with the hurricane season barely ½ over, the National Weather Service had used all but 4 names for hurricanes. The unused names were: Stan, Tammy, Vince and Wilma. After that, they'd resort to the Greek Alphabet: Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, and so on. Only in 1933 had they had 21 storms and they thought 21 names were enough.

Which leads a person to examine nature. Global warming did at least 2 things; it increased the number of storms and their severity, whether they were typhoons or hurricanes. Moreover, the planet was coming back to life or changing. Long extinct volcanoes were hot again and all of the plates on the mantle of the Earth were active, more so, or so it seemed.

Which leads into the subject of disasters. Disasters can be natural or man-made. But even here, the lines start to fade, a hurricane was a natural disaster but if global warming increased the number and severity of hurricanes, wasn't the natural disaster really man-made? We all know that global warming is a natural cycle, however, pollutants from the industrial revolution, increased the volume of pollutants, increasing the global warming.

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In ordinary times, life is a struggle and people oft times struggle just to survive. One good example would be people on fixed incomes; the prices go up faster than their incomes keep pace. Food is still very cheap in America, but gasoline, for example, is be-

coming increasingly expensive. American had a bit of a medical revolution and developed drugs to cure or treat many medical problems, assuming a person could afford the drugs in the first place. Very few fixed incomes allowed for \$5 pills. Senior citizens who took pills by the handful needed to own a bank or go without. These self-same people who couldn't afford the drugs were the very people who would have died earlier in life had the drugs not been available in the first place.

The American Dream is the idea held by many in the United States of America that through hard work, courage and determination one can achieve prosperity. These were values held by many early European settlers, and have been passed on to subsequent generations. What the American Dream has become is a question under constant discussion.

I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation.

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity.

But 100 years later, the Negro still is not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. And so we've come here today to dramatize a shameful condition.

In a sense we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men - yes, black men as well as white men - would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check that has come back marked "insufficient funds."

But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. And so we've come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and security of justice. We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the

sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksand's of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children.

It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. Nineteen sixty-three is not an end but a beginning. Those who hoped that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual. There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges.

But there is something that I must say to my people who stand on the warm threshold, which leads into the palace of justice. In the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny. And they have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone.

And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead. We cannot turn back. There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "When will you be satisfied?" We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality. We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities. We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as our children are stripped of their selfhood and robbed of their dignity by signs stating "for whites only." We cannot be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No, no we are not satisfied and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow jail cells. Some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive.

Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed.

Let us not wallow in the valley of despair. I say to you today my friends – so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.”

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification – one day right there in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

This will be the day, this will be the day when all of God’s children will be able to sing with new meaning “My country ‘tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land

where my father's died, land of the Pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring!"

And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true. And so let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania.

Let freedom ring from the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado. Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California.

But not only that; let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia.

Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee.

Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi – from every mountainside.

Let freedom ring. And when this happens, and when we allow freedom ring – when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children – black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics – will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual: "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"

Note: Great Speech, always loved it. It's a shame that Jesse Jackson never read it; he was probably there, just not listening.

The American Dream, along with escape from persecution or war in one's home country, had always been the primary reason for immigrants wanting to come to America. Throughout its history, America had been seen as a place where the streets are paved with gold, and life was handed to you on a silver platter.

The concept of the American Dream has been the subject of much criticism by, for example, Joseph Stiglitz. The main criticism is that the American Dream is misleading. These critics say that, for various reasons, it simply is not possible for everyone to become prosperous through determination and hard work alone. The consequences of this belief can include the poor feeling that it is their fault that they are not successful. It can also result in less effort towards helping the poor since their poverty is seen as "proof" of their laziness. The concept of the American Dream also ignores other factors of success such as the family and wealth one is born into and inheritable traits such as intelligence (although proponents of the dream would claim that starting wealth is irrelevant because of the belief that there is no level of poverty one cannot rise from with hard work).

The American Dream is seen by critics as being somewhat superficial or meaningless. Many literary works level exactly that criticism at the American Dream, such as Arthur Miller's play *Death of Salesman*. Such arguments are essentially rehashes of the old

adage “Money doesn’t buy happiness”, and that perhaps not everyone’s dream should be to achieve great monetary gain.

In particular some of the reasons the whole concept seems a myth to some are:

In the US it is sometimes difficult for children of poor families to attend college despite widely available financial aid; not attending college sets upper limits on their career success, and it is difficult to earn a bachelors’ degree – necessary for many fields – in one’s free time once one begins working full-time.

Limited economic mobility – The affluent have sometimes managed to convince the government to work to their advantage. For example, the recent repeal of inheritance tax and capital gains tax may work to further solidify the class system.

Economies of scale – It can be difficult to successfully start a business. One reason is because of the economies of scale necessary to survive in a commoditized market – though many markets today are not commoditized.

Genetic lottery – Some may point at a few people like Steve Jobs who have made it big, yet research has suggested that features like height and race may give certain people some advantages over others.

Ethics difference – As in other countries, actions considered ethical vary between Americans. For example, a CEO who sees certain stock options as excessive monetary gain would find it harder to reach his or her American Dream than a more pragmatist CEO.

So ask yourself, what ever happened to the American Dream? The answer is nothing happened to the American Dream, it just too expensive in the 21st Century. Martin Luther King had a dream. I do too. I dream of sitting on my behind, drawing \$3,000 a month in welfare payments and food stamps, talking on my cell phone and selling dope on the side to support my other interests. Not! If a hurricane comes, I’ll send the kid to stay with her father in the Superdome and hang out with my friends in the house next door, which is high and dry. I got an email where the guy claimed he was one po’d American. Friend, you aren’t alone.

All you really need to be prepared is a secure place to stay, a small generator, possibly 5kw, fuel, food and water for a month. A couple of changes of clothes would be nice and maybe a bar of soap. A few hurricane lamps, a camp stove, flashlights, etc. and you’d be set. MREs aren’t Meals Refused by Ethiopians; no one ever offered them any. What are you going to do when the next disaster strikes? Evacuate? Do it early and take your survival supplies with you, the government won’t show up for maybe a week. That’s the responsibility of the state and local governments remember the 10th Amendment? Former California Governor Pete Wilson compared the state of California’s response to the 1994 Northridge earthquake with New Orleans. By the time the feds showed up, everything was well in hand and the feds only did what they were supposed to do, supply money to rebuild. Uh-duh!

The American Dream – Chapter 2 – The Promise

Funny what happens when you change the ‘e’ to an ‘o’, it changes the complete meaning. What promise? A chicken in every pot and a car in every garage?

If it seems like everybody and their mothers have cars, there’s good reason: America now has more registered cars than people registered to drive them.

Forget high gas prices. Never mind smog, the greenhouse gas effect and the impossibility of finding a parking space in some cities. We are buying cars – and presumably driving them – in unprecedented numbers.

A survey by the US Transportation Department has validated America’s love affair with the automobile, finding the average household with more vehicles than licensed drivers. It found 204 million cars, trucks or SUVs but only 191 million drivers. In fact, per household, the number of people is declining while the number of cars is going up.

Maybe we should blame Henry Ford for starting this polygamous affair. His Model T was mass-produced expressly so that everybody – with a job – could afford one. At 850 bucks, it was cheaper than a wagon and a team of horses. In 1928, soon-to-be President Herbert Hoover envisioned “a chicken in every pot and a car in every garage.”

Perhaps only Ford would have dreamed that two cars would someday become the American standard. – SF Chronicle 9/3/03. The author didn’t say how many cars he/she owned.

As many as 1 million people were ordered to clear out along the Gulf Coast, and hospital and nursing home patients were evacuated Wednesday as Hurricane Rita turned into a Category-5, 165-mph monster that would slam Texas by the weekend and inflict more misery on New Orleans.

Forecasters said Rita could be the most intense hurricane on record ever to hit Texas, and easily one of the most powerful ever to plow into the US mainland. Category 5 is the highest on the scale, and only three Category 5 hurricanes are known to have hit the US mainland - most recently, Andrew, which smashed South Florida in 1992.

The government didn’t keep their promises in any event. You were free to say whatever you wanted, except “fire” in a theatre. But you couldn’t post the other rules on the lawn of the courthouse. The 10 Commandments were loose adaptations from the original set of laws, the Code of Hammurabi. The Code of Hammurabi, created ca. 1700 BC, also known as the Codex Hammurabi, is one of the earliest sets of laws found, and one of the best preserved examples of this type of document from ancient Mesopotamia. I’m not opening a discussion here, so if you choose to disagree, fine, it isn’t important to the story. Quid pro quo. It’s a difference between fact and faith and I won’t dispute your faith

if you don't dispute my facts. Otherwise... and you can take that to the bank, to quote Senator Vernon Trent. What is more important, the journey or the destination? All roads lead to Rome. A slap on the back is only a few inches away from a kick on the butt.

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From my viewpoint the American Dream had become the American Nightmare. Having that trust fund back in Iowa precluded us from getting a lot of the assistance that was available. I'd rather be working than being beholden to anyone. I paid into Social Security for a long time, 20 years and I qualified for disability immediately. There hadn't been any question about that once I'd signed release forms giving them access to my medical records. Same thing happen to my 2 amigos, Ron and Clarence. Called Ron the other day to see what was new. Nothing. Ron stopped calling a while back, his health isn't the best and neither is Clarence's, so much for The Three Amigos.

I had the day watch, typing on my computer in my office, generating yet another bit of Survivalist Fiction. I don't know why I bothered, I always told a variation of the same story. Katrina had come and Rita was on the way. Los Angeles was warning that if we really did have the Big One, say on the Puente Hills Fault, lots of people would die because New Orleans was more prepared than Los Angeles. I was hoping that if we did, the ceiling would cave in my skull and it would be someone else's problem. There is a difference between being prepared and writing about it.

I was prepared all right; I had my Rambo III knife and my pair of Buck knives on the top of my monitor along with 1 of my only 2 guns, the Nazi .32 auto. All I had were two loaded clips of ammo. Had a .22 Saturday Night Special in my sock drawer, also with 2 loaded clips. Did I forget to mention my 4 D-cell MagLite? There was a 25# bag of rice and maybe 25# of beans sitting around. Lots of toilet paper, I was prepared. Didn't have a large quantity of meds on hand, but I had the gun and the Pharmacy was only a mile away. My wheelchair was fully charged and Chris had the 5kw genset I bought.

Sharon had a bad case of pinkeye. The daughter called because her ex- showed up on her job and she wanted Sharon to go to the courthouse and get the forms for a restraining order. It had rained during the morning, but wasn't now. A person can only speculate what will happen next, I'm out of Windex to clean my crystal ball. I zipped up the gun case and moved it and the knives to a lower shelf. During the Whittier Narrows quake, I was sitting at my computer in my drawers working on a computer program. At 7:42 a.m. on October 1, 1987, that a strong earthquake measuring M5.9 rocked the East Los Angeles region. The Whittier Narrows earthquake shook the region quite hard, registering shaking intensities of VIII on the Modified Mercalli intensity scale.

Everything piled on top of my monitor ended up in my lap. The wife was just stepping out of the shower when the quake struck. One daughter was thrown out of bed and the other slept through it. I got dressed and we went to the dining room for coffee. Bam, the first aftershock was almost as bad as the quake. Then there was a second aftershock.

The wife decided not to go to work and my state of Iowa office was in my home. Even if I'd had had an appointment that day, I wouldn't have gone.

Then we got the hell out of Dodge and moved to Palmdale. On January 17, 1994 at 4:30:55 am PST, the strong shaking of the Northridge earthquake rudely awakened residents of the greater Los Angeles area. This was the first earthquake to strike directly under an urban area of the United States since the 1933 Long Beach earthquake. Woke me up, the glass closet doors were rattling something awful. Almost threw me out of bed. We had a small crack in our stucco finish but nobody was hurt.

Did I mention that we just had a big quake? I had to get Chris's generator that I paid for, to keep my computer up and running so I could record these events. The phones are out so Ron and Clarence are own their own. Ron will be ok; he can use his elephant gun to shoot any prowlers. Why would anyone need a .375 H&H Magnum in Palmdale, we don't have any antelope in the Antelope Valley? The house didn't come down, but I'll probably have to prop it up a few places, just in case of aftershocks.

Daniel went half-crazy because of the earthquake so I gave Patti a handful of Xanax. I have a lot of Xanax and Vicodin. I checked and we're good for about 15 days on our meds. I have enough insulin to last about 40 days, that's my most important drug. Maybe I can pick up a box of .32 auto ammo at the Big 5 store that's next to the Wal-Mart where we refill our prescriptions. Don't have any money, but... I put the chair on the charger to top it off, just in case. Chris gave me one of the radios I bought to stay in touch with them.

These aftershocks have been a bear, worse than some earthquakes. There aren't any TV stations on the air so Adelphia probably has a problem. Dug out a battery operated radio from my bag of medical supplies, bandages and the like, and I am trying to find a station. No luck so far. Internet is down too, must have gone with the phones. Guess it wouldn't have made any difference if I had dial-up, DSL or cable access, nothing works. Checked the supplies and we didn't lose anything in the garage or the pantry. Sharon stocked up on flour and if we can fire up the Coleman stove, we can make some pan bread. Sure wish she hadn't given away my cast iron!

Anyway Chris and I are sharing the generator, powering only our refrigerators. I taped the doors shut so nothing will fall out again, hope he did the same. This is giving a whole new meaning to Rock and Roll. He said 30 minutes once every 2 hours until we can find more gasoline. I gave him the .22 so he had some protection too. The neighborhood has changed a lot over the years and I don't know more than 6 families out of the 39.

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Wednesday, September 21...

Had a doctor's appointment today in Northridge; didn't even try to go. The quake was caused by a heretofore unknown fault. One of the Lancaster stations came on the air late last night, according to Chris, and the earthquake was on that Pico Rivera Fault which is related to the Puente Fault they were talking about. Here's an article I downloaded on my computer to use in a story I was thinking about:

Much less famous than the San Andreas Fault, the Puente Hills fault may prove even more dangerous and destructive than its more well-known cousin, said Dr. James Dolan, an earth science professor at the University of Southern California. The quake to come will likely register stronger than 7 on the Richter scale, but neither Dolan nor anyone else can say when that will happen.

"In terms of location it couldn't be worse," Dolan said. "It lies right under the main urban area."

Dolan, in collaboration with Harvard seismologist John Shaw, published a paper in the April 4 issue of Science, which details the history of the Puente Hills fault, and the implications it may have for Los Angeles.

"We know we have a threat, and since we chose to live here, we really need to know what we're up against," Dolan said.

In surveying the fault's history, Dolan discovered that the four massive quakes all happened before Europeans came to California. He concluded that the last few centuries have been a time of near-inactivity for the fault line.

"We're in a quiet period, and we have been since the Europeans got here," he said. "This relative seismic quiet is not going to last forever, but that's not a cause of panic."

A lot of stress has been built up along the fault in the last few hundred years, he said.

"We've only released about 10 or 20 percent of the energy we've put in," Dolan said. "That means the rest needs to be released."

The Puente Hills fault gave a small indication of its power in 1987, when it caused the 5.9-magnitude Whittier Narrows earthquake that rocked Los Angeles. But that quake was nothing in comparison to what the Puente Hills fault could generate in the future, said Dolan.

Before the 1987 quake, scientists weren't sure the fault even existed. After the quake, "it became sort of a no-brainer," he said.

But it took more than a decade to come up with the proof. Shaw, along with Peter Shearer, of the University of California, San Diego, provided that proof in a 1999 paper that carefully sketched out a three-dimensional map of the fault.

Shaw and Shearer constructed that map by using an unusual tool: a large weight of several tons, dropped from a massive dump truck, which Dolan describes as “the ultimate low rider.”

The technique is similar to a bat’s echolocation method of “seeing:” sound waves generated by the falling weight traveled deep into the earth, then bounced back to the surface, to be recorded by the seismologists.

Dolan used a different method to collect his data – he drilled 15 holes up to two miles deep in the earth’s crust, extracted subterranean sediment and analyzed what he had dug up.

And all of these scientists also relied on information provided by petroleum companies that have been boring holes in the crust of California for decades.

All these techniques have been required, Dolan said, because the Puente Hills fault is much different than more common fault lines, like the San Andreas. The Puente Hills fault is a so-called “blind-thrust system,” meaning that it never reaches the surface of the earth – the primary reason why seismologists took so long finding it.

“All the real action is happening 10 miles beneath the surface,” Dolan said.

Dolan said the recent Science paper is important because it provides real information about these “blind-thrust systems,” which have been largely a mystery to scientists for years.

This data, he said, is helping to put together the “big, thousand-piece jigsaw puzzle,” that is the seismic landscape of California. But seismology still has a ways to go.

“We still by no means have the whole puzzle figured out, but we’re starting to get a look at the gross picture,” he said.

I guess that explains it, LA must be in a world of hurts. I’ll be back in a while, Chris wants to go to Wal-Mart and see about bottled water. If push comes to shove, I have a 50-gallon hot water heater; it was strapped into place and didn’t budge. I’ll try and talk him into going by Big 5; Wal-Mart doesn’t sell guns in California, just ammo.

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Somebody had already broken into the store so all we did was enter, didn’t break in. Grabbed 2 boxes of .32acp ammo and a brick of .22lr ammo for Chris. Took all the Sam’s water we could find, it wasn’t a lot, a few cases. He was reluctant to go to Big 5, but I told him the two little popguns we had weren’t worth a crap. While I was at it, I grabbed all of the 12-gauge and 5.56 ammo I could find. Chris grabbed several empty 5-gallon gas cans. I hit the pharmacy and found all of our meds; we were covered for a while. I know it’s stealing, but hey, that’s how I feel every time I pay for a prescription,

like I'm being robbed. It isn't Wal-Mart's fault, but still... I had Sharon write me a list of everything she took and I knew what I took. Loaded up for the long haul here. They don't seem to carry a lot of these drugs in large quantities anyway, some of them are expensive for them to inventory.

Big 5 was locked up tighter than a drum. The electricity is out so if the alarm sounds, it will be on battery power. Assuming they're connected to the Sheriff's Station by phone, we should be able to get in and out before the cops show up. I was nervous the whole time, but we came away well-armed, several shotguns, a couple of rifles and lots of ammo. We stopped by Ron and Linda's but no one was home. His guns are in safes and there's no way to get into them or we'd have more guns. He also has his ammo locked up.

o

Chris wanted to take the pickup with the generator mounted, that's where he has it – permanently mounted in his truck – and see about getting gas in the cans. I figured why the hell not, I'd always claimed in my stories that a person would end up looting in the aftermath of any disaster. We went around until we found a station that was open. I'm glad it's the end of the month; there is money in my bank account, for all the good that will do. Chris had enough cash to fill his tank and the cans. He usually keeps a bunch of cash on hand to buy parts for his racecar. I'm glad for that, without his cash, we couldn't have bought the 10-gallons for his tank and the 50-gallons for his cans.

The guy who owned the station had a .44 Magnum revolver, S&W model 29 ala Dirty Harry. He also had a couple of shotguns and a generator to run the pumps. The price of gas was \$1 per gallon higher, at \$3.999, but I didn't really see it as gouging, he had gas and no one else was open. I don't think Chris quite saw it the same way, but we really needed the gas. The guy said as soon as it was gone, he'd be gone too, because he didn't think anyone would be delivering any more anytime soon. Said if we could get more cans, he'd sell us more. What the hell, Pep Boys was locked up tight, too, so we sort of helped ourselves to some more cans. I told you I'd take whatever it took to survive.

While we were there, we loaded up on PRI-D and PRI-G, mostly PRI-G. Got several of the little bottles they had for putting in your gas tank. I told Chris I'd make it up to him in another way; I knew where we could get more firearms – at High Desert Storm assuming he didn't have further compulsions about stealing. I'm here to tell you I didn't either. Anyway, she wasn't there, but the store was. We broke in and helped ourselves and I left Sandy a note telling her thanks, but I signed the note I left telling her who I was and that I'd make it right when I could. She had some of the surplus 7.62 and a reasonable amount of .45 Colt. Sandy also had an assortment of .45 caliber Colt firearms but none of the 7.62s. I felt bad stealing the guns, but I need them worse than she did, or so I rationalized. That explained why I left her the note and hadn't at Wal-Mart or Big 5.

I didn't plan on leaving the next guy a note either, because he was charging really unreasonable prices but had the M1As I wanted. He had several of the Parkerized Remington 870s in stock and a bit more than the MSRP or I'd have left him note too. This particular store also carried Kimber and Browning Hi-Power pistols and other LEO gear so I really didn't feel too bad helping myself to what I wanted, especially the Walther PPKs he sold for well over the MSRP. To be totally honest with you, if he charged fair prices, I have left him a note with my name and the serial numbers of the guns I took for Chris and myself like I did at Sandy's. But this guy paid \$300 for a gun and sold it for \$1,000, so if I had the money and was having a good day, I might pay him. I might just clean the guns up and return them after, too. Did I mention all of his Mini-14s with the \$900 price tags? I left the tags, but took the guns.

I was getting a headache and the ground was rock and rolling and I was getting very, very angry. I was supposed to write about this crap, not live through it, assuming I did. I hadn't driven a vehicle since 2003. If push came to shove, I could, but I really rather not. Besides, I didn't have keys to our car.

Let me tell you what I did have:

- Remington 870s, 20" barrels
- Winchester rifle in .45 Colt
- Beretta Stampede in .45 Colt
- Ruger Vaquero in .45 Colt
- Kimber pistols in .45 ACP with spare magazines
- Browning Hi-Powers in 9mm with spare magazines
- More Remington shotguns
- 2 M1A rifles, 1 standard and 1 scout
- Walther PPKs, one for Sharon and one for me, .380 with spare magazines
- All the ammo we could carry

On top of that, we had 100+ gallons of gas for the genset, water and the food we had at home. Finally, I had a Vicodin headache and I wanted a drink, not water, in the worst possible way. I settled for a Coke Classic and 2 of the 750mg Vicodin.

"I've got the hives."

"What did you eat?"

"I think it's the medicine I'm putting in my eye."

"Take some Benadryl."

"I did."

"Take some more. Should I go break into the Von's store and steal some?"

The American Dream – Chapter 3 – The Reality

...was more like the American Nightmare.

Chris and I ran around the day of the quake like chickens with our heads cut off. I ended up with a headache that even Vicodin didn't cut. I bought mama several cases of Bud, she sometimes liked to sit and drink a beer in front of me just to test my resolve. It was ok; I didn't much care for beech wood. Started out on Oly, switched to Bud in college, went to Coors when I could get it and ended up on Miller Genuine Draft. Liked my Bombay Sapphire gin, Jack Daniel's and Chivas Regal. Didn't care for rum, vodka or a lot of other booze, but Calvert was always smooth going down and 10-High when I was short on money. I can't taste the JD anymore I'm lucky. Booze was like brew 102, a beer that they used to make in LA. After 101 tries at getting the formula just right and failing, the brew masters decided they just use the next recipe, regardless. You know the story; it was the worst one of the batch.

"Nah, someone is going to end up shooting Chris and you."

"Here you go, your own personal firearms, a Walther PPK and a Browning Hi-Power. I got you a Mini-14, too."

What am I going to do with those?"

"I wouldn't use them to turn the bacon. Give me a minute to load up all of my new guns and Chris and I'll go grocery shopping. Anything you need?"

"I'll take a 12-pak of Bud."

"Fine, I get all they have."

"A 12-pak is plenty."

"For you." (Chris likes beer, too)

Who needs enemies when the wife asks you to bring beer home from the grocery store? Especially when you have a 2 Vicodin headache and LA just went into the crater and drug Palmdale along. What happened to the American Dream? Let me explain, a M6.7 on the Puente Hills Fault hit it. By the time they got LA cleaned up and came to Palmdale we'd have died of old age.

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The problem with living California is that when a Fault lets loose, the other faults transmit the impulses even if they don't let loose. Fifty miles from the epicenter of the Northridge quake, I was almost tossed out of bed. Twenty-five miles from the Whittier

Narrows quake; I ended up with my monitor in my lap. It's ok, life's a bitch and then you die and I've been through most of the bitchy part.

"What are you doing?"

"Recording our story for posterity."

"Who cares?"

"Good point. I have to write, it's my raison d'être. Time for a beans and bacon story anyway."

"Did you get bacon when you went to the store?"

"It wasn't on your list. What the heck, I got some anyway, when you're stealing think big. We're good on meds for 5 years. It's a shame the grocery store didn't have a plasma screen TV."

"What would you want that for?"

"It's an essential survival supply."

"Really?"

An amateur archeologist looking for remnants of a demolished brewery near the 101 Freeway died Tuesday night when a dirt berm collapsed on top of him and another collector, fire officials said. A group of four people was searching for artifacts at the site of the former Maier Brewing Company near 417 Commercial Street, just south of the 101 Freeway. The Brewery – known for its Brew 102 and other brands of beer – stood on the plot for more than a century and housed a bottling plant, malt house, refrigeration cellars and a stable and blacksmith shop for horse-drawn delivery wagons. The brewery was demolished in the 1980s. Poor guy. Digging at the site of a former brewery – that sounds like something I would do.

o

You do know what you call 10 cases of Bud sitting the garage don't you? Not enough. A plasma screen TV really is a survival supply; you can see Lucy Jones explaining why she doesn't know anything about the earthquake that just happened. Providing Adelpia ever comes back online. Kate 'Butch' Hutton isn't much better; she's under orders to avoid answering questions with meaningful answers. She uses the same writer as Ray Nagin.

We wanted to drive to LA to see the damage, but couldn't spare the gas. Five gallons would run the genset for about 10 hours at ½ power. A refrigerator used on average, 800w to run and 1500 – 2000w to start. We could run all 3 refrigerators, provided we

staggered their starts to one at a time on ½ power. Each time we ran the genset, we used another ¼ gallon. Which translated into about 500 run periods, given our available fuel. We had picked up a dozen cans at pep Boys, but the Chevron station was closed. We need a pump to suck gas out of someone else's tank. Chris said that we really needed to find a pump and get to 60 more gallons of gas plus what was in his truck,

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Thursday, September 22...

"Hey, I got a pump, get a gun and let's go."

"Where?"

"Chevron station at Pearblossom Highway and 138."

"Fine, I always wanted to shoot a mutant zombie biker."

"A who?"

"A what! A mutant zombie biker is shorthand on Frugal Squirrel's website for a bad guy."

"I'm glad you explained that, I always thought a bad guy was a Republican."

"That too, so long as you include the Democrats. I have a 2½-gallon gas can if that will help."

"That's a portion of a day, why not."

"Did you take the fuel cans you have for racing fuel?"

"Did you open the automatic shutoff valve you have on your gas line?"

"I don't know how, I'll have to ask Dick. I doubt that there is any natural gas anyway. Do we need oil for the generator?"

"As long as we're there, sure."

"All right, I'm loaded but I sure wish I had 20-round magazines for this rifle."

"Where can you get those?"

"Arizona or Nevada."

"Forget I asked. Did you sight in the rifle?"

“At the range I can see, it’s good enough. Where did you find a pump?”

“I took it out of your carpet shampooer. I checked it out and it will lift at least 20 feet.”

“The first shampooer broke the pump and the second one developed a leak. It’s cheaper to rent a Rug Doctor.”

“Tell Sharon that we should be back in less than an hour.”

“Did you tell Patti?”

“Yep.”

“I’m sure Sharon already knows.”

It was slower than filling the cans from the pump, but we filled all of the cans and topped off the pickup. Did I ever write about an extraction pump in any of my stories? We had filled every car Chris (3) and I (1) had so we had the 25 5-gallon cans (10 from Wal-Mart, 12 from Pep Boys and 3 for racing fuel) my 2½-gallon can for the lawnmower and the gas in the tanks of the cars. FEMA should show up sometime or maybe the CNG. The Puente Hills earthquake would prove to be the mostly costly natural disaster in the history of the US. And, they hadn’t cleaned up New Orleans or the area north of Corpus Christi (Rita) yet because Rita was still in the Gulf.

“Bring the troops home, George, we’re broke.”

“You’ll have to yell louder, it’s 3,000 miles to Washington, DC.”

“I wonder when FEMA will get here?”

“I’m guessing 2007.”

“I don’t have enough beans and rice.”

“We’ll stop by Albertson’s on the way home, get me some too.”

“Get your own. If we’re lucky, they’ll have water too.”

“Don’t they have a pharmacy?”

“Now that you mention it, maybe I should shop. Aw, crap, they’re open. Let’s try Stater Brothers, they’re closed.”

“Do they have a pharmacy?”

“No, but we have drugs. I did pretty well at Wal-Mart and Von’s. I even picked up some good stuff, like morphine sulfate and oxycontin. No injections, but I got the pills. The only thing I might run out of in a couple of years is insulin syringes.”

“5 year supply?”

“Lifetime supply if I’m lucky. We should come back after Albertson’s closes and look for more Avandia and Prevacid.”

“What are they?”

“\$5 a pill.”

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“How come you didn’t get any liquor?”

“They didn’t have enough.”

“They must have 1,000 bottles, what would you call that?”

“A 3-year supply.”

“But you got 10 cases of Bud at Von’s.”

“It will last Sharon a year, maybe 2.”

“How about you?”

“Maybe a week.”

“You’re as goofy now as you used to be when you drank. What would happen if you took a drink?”

“I don’t know, nothing good and I’d rather not find out. That’s all of the flour, sugar, shortening, yeast, beans, rice, and pasta products. I also got toilet paper, soap and toothpaste. Where is the spaghetti sauce?”

“Aisle 9.”

“I’ll get that and you go get a 3-4 carts of Folgers coffee, the biggest cans they have. We usually drink one can a week. Then we’ll move the carts to the loading dock and fill the truck.”

“We forgot the water.”

“We’ll come back. Patti and Sharon will tell us everything we missed.”

“How did you know?”

“Easy, no matter what we got, we forgot something.”

“Do you want to wait until after dark?”

“We’ll go now, nobody would be stupid enough to loot Stater Brothers in the middle of the day. We need to return to Wal-Mart too, I need an oven for my camp stove.”

“Anything else?”

“We’ll shop. It depends on what we see. I can tell what I think we ought to do.”

“What?”

“Find some 55-gallon drums. Every time the power goes out, that Chevron station at Pearblossom Highway and 138 is the last place to get power back. They were suggesting on the radio that power wouldn’t be on for a while so it might be a good idea to get a few drums of gas for the generator. I’m not sure where to get drums, but it would be a good idea.”

“I know where to get the drums, are you sure we’re going to need them?”

“You can always use the gas in your car.”

“Ok, maybe we will. Let me go see how many drums I can get and I’ll pick you up when I get back.”

“Don’t you want me to ride shotgun?”

“I’ll be ok, I’m going to see a friend. I think maybe 8 drums will fit in the back of my truck. That would give us enough gas for a month or more. FEMA should be here by then.”

“Right, they’re cleaning up Katrina and LA, they should be here just anytime. And to top that off, Rita is coming.”

“You sound like they aren’t coming.”

“A few days back, when we still had the Internet, I read on CNN that they found a Katrina survivor who was holed up with his dead wife for 3 weeks. Can you imagine? Besides, it isn’t FEMA responsibility; it’s California’s. With Arnold in Sacramento, what chance do we have? I hope when he shows up he brings us both a cigar.”

“You voted for Arnold?”

"I voted against Gray Davis and the Democrats."

"The next thing you're going to tell me is that you're going to church."

"I went to church after 9/11/01; I've got a year to go. When was the last time you went to church?"

"A wedding or a funeral, I'm not sure."

"I'll be waiting for you to get back. It's going to take some time to get the gas, that pump only pumps 3gpm."

"How about we hook up the genset to the stations power?"

"That won't help; the guy has to be there to turn on the pumps at the register."

"Then I'll get a different pump, even some of those hand pumps deliver 15gpm. I try to find one that will run off the truck battery."

"Can you get more than 8 drums?"

"Yeah why?"

"At 15gpm, we can fill 8 drums in a half hour. If you can get more, we can stock up; we have plenty of PRI-G. I didn't notice any terrible damage; our only problems are the loss of utilities. We're going to be on the bottom of the list to get help."

If you run a gasoline generator 24/7 for about six months, you'll probably end up throwing it away, that's about 4,380 hours and I'm guessing that the life of a little genset like that probably isn't much over 5,000 hours. I had completely forgotten about Harbor Freight Tools in Lancaster. That's where I bought the genset Chris had in his truck. Harbor Freight has the Generac Guardian 15kw residential standby generator for \$2,999.99 and the 12kw model for \$2,699.99. They also carry the Coleman Powermates. We needed to go shopping, not buying. You know where Harbor Freight is located, right? 2330 MALL LP RD BLD 5 #105, they moved. And, they have a store in Corpus Christi.

"Just get the generators; we'll shop for tools another time. We don't want to take anything that doesn't qualify as an emergency supply."

"It doesn't matter, Gary, it's still called looting in California."

"In that case, help yourself. Get some of those extension cords while you're at it, maybe we can help out some of the neighbors."

Of course you had to order the Generac Guardian 15kw residential standby generator, they didn't have any in stock. They had some 20 HP, 12kW peak/10.5kW rated Honda powered gasoline generators though; we took all they had, extras for the neighbors. Didn't know the guy who ran the store so I didn't leave a note. I think maybe I'm a natural born thief who never had an excuse to 'borrow' before. I'll give the stuff back or pay for it; when I'm done with it, maybe – nice generators. I wonder if Chris will sell me some drums.

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I pulled the main fuses and the front of the electrical panel. Hooked the new generator right in, bypassing the circuit breaker on the generator. I also turned off the 2 circuit breakers to the air conditioning and went back behind the house and turned it off there too. Then I fired it up. We had lights! Chris gave me 8 of the drums of gas. We had to use his hoist to lift them off the truck onto my little cart that I original bought to mount the generator on. Must have weighed 400 pounds. Anyway, once I got the drum where I wanted it, Chris helped me get it off the cart. Once we had all 8 moved, we went back to fill the other 8 drums.

When we got back from Chevron, we unloaded his 8 drums and he attached fittings and a hose from his shop to the little holes and stacked the drums on their sides, little holes down. He had it set up so the hose fed the fuel line directly. Talk about a long run time... I borrowed the hoist and chain. I could see he was going to have a problem because the bottom row of drums was lower than the fuel pipe on the generator.

"We need to build a stand to hold the drums off the ground."

"What we really need is a drum pallet or portable drum racks. I'll ask my friend where I can get some. How about a 16-drum pallet? I should go get more drums."

"How many can you get?"

"All you want."

Chris got his shotgun and headed out to see his friend. This was very unusual because Chris doesn't like guns. A couple of hours later he was back in a large truck with 6 racks and 80 more 55-gallon drums. I got to thinking about that. We had borrowed 6 generators, 1-me, 2-Chris, 3-Dick, 4-Dave and 5-Lance. I wondered who was going to get the last generator and drums.

Dick had finally shown up, it had taken him a while to get home. Chris gave him a generator, a pallet and 16 drums. Dick talked to Chris for a bit and they took off with Chris in Dick's pickup. Later they came back with 12 more 55-gallon drums of gas, a large box of $\frac{3}{4}$ " T fittings, $\frac{3}{4}$ " end fittings and some hose. While Dick wired in his generator, Chris set up the rack and 16 drums. He used the fittings and hose to connect all of the $\frac{3}{4}$ " out-

lets together and connected the hose to the fuel intake tube on the generator. Then he got his pump and began to fill Dick's tanks.

While Dick and Dave went to get more gas, Chris and I set up the pallets and put in the empty drums. When they got back with the 12 drums refilled, we filled the empty drums that were already in the racks. This continued until dark. The real problem was that we had 16 drums full of gas sitting on the ground and had to empty those drums into the drums on the racks, move them, plumb them, etc.

I usually just sit on my hind end in front of my computer. Man, I was so tired I was numb and they were doing most of the work. We got all 5 generators wired in and the fuel transferred to the drums in the racks. During normal times, Chris, Dick and Dave leave at oh dark thirty and I sleep as late as I want.

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Friday, September 23...

"Chris is here."

"What time is it?"

"6am."

"What do you want?"

"Get dressed and help us transfer gas to your tanks."

"Wait, I have to get coffee. Give me 10 minutes. I'll do my morning routine and join you."

"The guy showed up at the Chevron station just after we pulled out, so we need to find someplace else to get more gasoline. We still have 20 empty drums. In case you didn't know it, TV is back on. The Texas coast is starting to get wind from that hurricane. According to the TV, somebody looted a couple gun stores, Harbor Freight, Wal-Mart and Stater Brothers."

"Gee, I wonder who that could have been. I guess they haven't been to Von's yet, huh? Give a minute to get dressed."

The American Dream – Chapter 4 – The Aftershocks

“That guy is going to crap when he sticks his tanks. We got away with a total of 76 55-gallon drums and the 12 5-gallon gas cans.”

“Yep. Grand theft, gas, 4,240-gallons at \$3 a gallon.”

“How many drugs did you steal?”

“A five year supply for Sharon and me, about \$15,000. What are you going to do with the other generator?”

“I haven’t decided, do you need it for something?”

“I owe Sandy for the Winchesters and the revolvers. I figured to give it to her on account so she doesn’t have me arrested.”

“Robbing Peter to pay Paul?”

“Robbing Harbor Freight to pay Sandy for what we took from her. If we can give her the pallets and drums, that would help too. If we can give her some gas, it will be even.”

“You think you can avoid prosecution?”

“If we give her enough gas, maybe. We took 3 Winchesters and 3 revolvers, 2 Berettas and one Ruger. We also took the 7.62 and .45 ammo. I think I owe her about \$4,500. The price tag on those generators was \$2,400. That means I owe her \$2,100 in drums and gas.”

“The racks were \$700 each. The drums were free. I still have to pay him \$4,200 for 6 racks, you know.”

“So if we gave her about \$1,400 worth of gas, we’d be even?”

“If she accepts it.”

“I didn’t have to leave the note. Maybe I’ll get lucky.”

“Maybe you’ll get shot.”

“Thank you, Jesus.”

“You still have a death wish?”

“I’m just tired. How are we going to pay you friend?”

“He said we could pay him in gasoline, he wants 1,500 gallons to call it even. I figured I’d get him 28 drums of gas.”

“And you need me?”

“The Sheriff is out of his hidey hole, you’ll be riding shotgun.”

“Just as long as you know about the felony murder rule, fine.”

o

“I’m Gary. I owe you for some guns. I left a note in your desk drawer with the serial numbers. Would you consider taking a 12kw generator and some gasoline in exchange for what I owe you?”

“I ought to shoot you.”

“Does that mean that I shouldn’t have left the note?”

“What are you offering?”

“I’ll fill out the federal forms and give you a 12kw generator, a rack and 16 55-gallon drums. We’ll fill the drums with gas until you say were even. I also took some 7.62 and .45 Colt ammo, it’s all on the list.”

“550 gallons of gas and you fill out the forms. I know you; you come in with Ron Brown.”

“I may have taken your weapons but we were desperate. That’s why I left the note, I felt very bad about it.”

“Ever been in jail?”

“Spent a night in the drunk tank in 1965.”

“No felony convictions?”

“Nope.”

“Can you pass the exam?”

“Can I take it open book?”

“Who cares? Have you heard from Ron?”

“He and Linda are missing in action.”

“No they’re not, they’re in Laguna.”

“Did they go down to see her father?”

“He said that they we staying until Wednesday. I’d guess they’re stuck down there.”

“Sorry about taking the guns. All I had was a Nazi .32 auto and a Sterling .22 auto.”

“What do you have now?”

“Those plus 3 Winchesters and 3 revolvers.”

“Why did you take the 7.62?”

“Just in case I ended up killing someone with a .308 who didn’t have much ammo.”

“The Santa Fe Gun Galleria was broken into too.”

“Really, what did they get?”

“2 M1As, some Mini-14s, Kimbers, Remington Shotguns, Walther PPKs and some Browning Hi-Powers.”

“I used to own a Browning Hi-Power, 2 Remington shotguns and 2 Mini-14s, but I’ve never owned a Walther, M1A or a Kimber.” (That’s True; I didn’t say I don’t have any. Drunken survival 101.)

o

Sometimes you get caught and sometimes you get lucky. I got damned lucky. Sandy could have had me locked up and thrown away the key. I guess maybe giving her a stolen generator and some gas worked out well. Of course, we still had to get Chris’s friend 1,500 gallons of gas, a project that would take 100 minutes pumping time plus running back and forth. The friend put 28 drums in the back of his big truck and we were off and running. I’m too old for this crap, but being a night owl, who better to ride shotgun? Got the Kimber, M1A, and 870 I didn’t own and left around 11pm to get the gas. Curfew, you know, but only because the lights were out. Fine, we didn’t turn on the lights on the truck. Have you ever ridden with a racecar driver in a big truck when the only light is the light of the moon? Don’t, it will cost you about 15 years you may not be able to spare. Chris won the points championship the last 2 years in his old beat up Dodge. Got over being impetuous.

You know where we went right? We went to the same Chevron station. Chevron gouges, their sign said \$2.95, \$3.05, \$3.15 and \$3.29 for #2. Wasn’t like in the south 3 weeks earlier, but damn, why was diesel so high? Must put perfume in their gas or something. Techron is Chevron’s new gasoline additive. The additive consists of a mix-

ture of compounds – polyether amines (or what Chevron calls “Tehron Technology”) – that are highly effective at fighting deposits in an engine’s intake system while avoiding contributing to combustion chamber deposits.

Chevron patented these compounds 15 years ago and has been improving and reformulating them ever since. Chevron’s new fuel additive delivers the latest innovation in the company’s state-of-the-art, patented Tehron technology. Although the underlying technology has proven highly effective in Chevron gasoline’s and in bottled concentrate for years, this latest improvement brings consumers to Chevron’s highest level of performance yet. Chevron gasoline’s with Tehron are unbeatable at helping protect and maintain engine performance and helping minimize emissions. Chevron ad, couldn’t you tell? I know how much they make, don’t tell me. Don’t get me started. Two hours later we were cruising down the boulevard with a truck full of 55-gallon drums of gas and no lights. Chris dropped me off at the house and headed to his friend’s to pick up his own truck. Must have not caught.

o

Saturday, September 24...

Wanted to watch Rita kick the crap out of the Gulf Coast, when I got up around 10am. No, 6am, knock, knock.

“Gary, it’s Chris.”

“Now what?”

“You didn’t answer the radio.”

“You didn’t give me a charge stand, the battery is dead. Come in, I’ll make you some Earl Grey.”

“Tanks.”

About 2 years back, Chris’s hairline started to recede, or so I assume. Anyway he shaved his head and, he drinks Earl Grey tea, remind you of anyone? Jon Luc. Chris has a real tough job, clipping the microphone to Mary Hart’s bra. ET is on IMDb.com, but Chris’s name isn’t listed, none of the wire monkeys are. I love it when Chris discusses the movie stars they have on the show. He tells you which guys wear toupees, etc. You’d be surprised. Chris doesn’t look like Patrick Stewart, BTW.

“What are you getting me up at 6am on a Saturday morning for?”

“What’s the deal on the guns?”

“The ones we got at Sandy’s?”

“Yeah, the cowboy guns.”

“They’re paid for and all in my name. You have a gun and no one knows you have it, why?”

“Is that what they call a strawman purchase?”

“What’s the difference, they were gifts?”

“What about the other guns?”

“I wouldn’t flash them, they’re hot.”

“That’s what I thought. They’re on the front porch, I don’t want them.”

“The 7.62 rifle is a Springfield Armory M1A Scout. What are you, nuts? Never mind, I’ll be glad to have it. Aren’t you going to keep a shotgun?”

“Not if it’s hot.”

“Why not?”

“Darlene is nuttier than a fruitcake. It would be just like her to write down the serial numbers and tell Johnny. He got married, you know.”

“I heard that she went to the Sheriff’s Department and tried to off herself.”

“Right, she took an overdose of Pepto Bismol. Couldn’t even hold her on a 5150. Besides, I don’t want her getting her hands on a gun.”

Pepto Bismol? I’m leaving her out of this one. As nosy as she is, maybe I ought to offer her a couple hundred Xanax. Nah, assisted suicide...

Anyway 5 of us had electricity. Now that we had electricity, we didn’t have to eat so many beans anyway. Mama came up with a 5-pound box of Minute Rice. Did I tell you that she doesn’t like pintos? Note to self: We’re down to 18-pounds of beans on the shelf, I better buy another 10-pounds of Frijoles del Norte. I don’t think those are grown in Dakota.

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...Category Five Rita continuing to strengthen over the central Gulf of Mexico... The estimated minimum central pressure is 897 MB ...26.49 inches. This means Rita is the third most intense hurricane in terms of pressure in the Atlantic Basin. Hey Ray, how are things looking in New Orleans? We had the big one the other day in LA... We only

looted things necessary for our survival, like guns, gas, food and booze... During any shift, the LAPD only has ~1,000 officers working and they're 50 miles away.

I had to chuckle at the news, Amber Frey, Scott Peterson's girlfriend has been collecting child support from some poor sap for 4 years. He took her to court over the visitation rights and while he was that it, they ran a paternity test. He wasn't the baby's father; the daddy was a guy who ran a rib joint in Fresno. I wonder if Amber likes to garden and what her favorite implement is, a rake or a hoe? You can't make stuff like this up no matter how hard you try. Speaking of news, another pilot in LA earned his wings today – I heard the bell tinkle (*It's a Wonderful Life* (1946)). JetBlue Flight 292 had a problem on the FRENCH built plane with its nose gear. The passengers said it was the smoothest landing they'd ever made. They watched the drama on the planes TV. I hope someone showed them a tape of the landing. At least the tail didn't fall off. The problems with JetBlue Flight 292 marked at least the seventh time that the front landing gear of an Airbus jet has locked at a 90-degree angle, forcing pilots to land commercial airliners under emergency conditions, according to federal records. A Canadian study issued last year documented 67 incidents of nose-landing-gear failures on Airbus 319, 320 and 321 aircraft worldwide since 1989.

In answer to a reader, I'm actually 62 and physically and mentally 77. I'm beginning to remember all the stuff I forgot about growing up. When I started to smoke in Iowa, cigs were about \$6.50 a carton. It was easier to buy a carton than a pack, this little old lady who though everyone was a kid, didn't ID you if you bought a carton. It cost 30¢ for a Saturday double feature with a Movietone or 2 cartoons and a serial. Popcorn was 10¢ a box and later the theater installed the first soda-dispensing machine in Charles City, 10¢ and if you were lucky the cup came down right and you actually got a cup of pop; got 50¢ every Saturday to get lost for the afternoon. When I was in the Air Force ('61-'65), cigs were \$1.90 a carton and I made a couple of hundred a month.

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It looked like we had it made because TV was talking about the utilities coming back on. Yeah right, we couldn't tell if the continuing quakes were aftershocks from the Puente Hill Fault or the San Andreas getting ready to let go. Around 2:30 that afternoon, we stopped guessing, the San Andreas let go from the left to the right, assuming you were facing south. Started somewhere this side of San Bernardino and went all the way past Ft. Tejon. Let me tell you what I know:

Many people think that the 1906 San Francisco earthquake was the largest earthquake to strike California in historical times, but that distinction actually belongs to the shaker that rocked southern and central California on January 9, 1857, uprooting trees in the San Bernardino Mountains and causing the Kern River to flow backwards for a time. Because of the small population in the state in 1857 (perhaps 350,000 people), there were only two fatalities, one near Fort Tejon, where many buildings were destroyed. The earthquake was strongly felt from Los Angeles to San Francisco. The rupture on the surface of the earth can still be traced to this day, extending from near Parkfield,

California, to near San Bernardino, California, over a distance of roughly 225 miles. Strong shaking from the earthquake was said to last from 1 to 3 minutes.

The earthquake occurred along the San Andreas Fault, the major fault in California. The latest estimate of the size of this earthquake is magnitude 7.9. An earthquake of this size will certainly recur along the San Andreas Fault, with devastating results given California's population today. The average recurrence interval for this earthquake has been estimated at 140 years \pm 40 years. Since it is already 144 years since the last earthquake, the next one may not be too far in the future.

This one wasn't quite that long hence it was only M7.3 but registered shaking intensities of X on the Modified Mercalli intensity scale. Sucker lasted about 190 seconds, but it seemed like a year. Grabbed my new borrowed M1A, the radio and headed for the front yard.

"Hey, are you there?"

Chris didn't answer so I walked the 100 feet to his house.

"EVERYONE OK?"

"You don't need to shout. Don't know, but the house didn't fall down."

"You should see it from out here, you'd best evacuate."

Daniel, bless him, was screaming at the top of his lungs. Their house was canted but still up. I stepped back and took a second look at ours, same thing. I have earthquake insurance and we need new carpet anyway. And because I have California Earthquake Insurance and Farmer's, it looked like I was in pretty good shape. Probably take 2 years to settle up but as long as they didn't condemn the house, I was in good shape. Lorrie, David and the 5 kids showed up about 30 minutes later. Their home was older and in worse shape. No TV again and I doubted the utilities would be on for a while. I looked to the sky to try and spot that darned rock.

"I'm not staying in that house another night."

"Yes, dear. The patio cover is still up, but wait until I check it out, it could come down. Grab a couple of lawn chairs and park yourself on the front lawn."

"What next Gary?"

"I think maybe Chris and I have to go shopping for tents."

They only had 2 of each; everyone else was on their own. Dick has an 18' travel trailer. Dave could stay with him or go get a tent. Lance had a tent and so did David and Lorrie, my old tent. I ran a rope from my shed to the back fence and hung a piece of black plas-

tic, for privacy. We would also need a folding table and folding chairs; Staples had them, now we do. I grabbed the propane bottles and ask Sharon to take me where we could get them filled. The guy down on Sierra Highway always keeps several 5 and 10-gallon propane tanks filled. I grabbed 2 10-gallon bottles and left my two empty 5-gallon bottles. The reason they're empty is because they're too old to refill.

Somewhere along the way, we discovered a problem with the plumbing, the toilet drains slowed down. Then when the San Andreas let loose, they stopped draining altogether. Good, we could use the water from the hot water heater for something else. The TV stopped talking about the utilities because the TV stopped talking. The other aftershocks were nothing compared to what we had now. I knew things were bad when Sharon started to cuss. I hid in my office because she wouldn't go back in the house.

One of my physicians claimed that all of the bad weather was just part of a natural cycle that was 5,000-years long and due to end in 30 years. 30 years? I sure hope he's wrong, alpha, beta, gamma, delta, epsilon, zeta, eta, theta, iota, kappa, lambda, mu, nu, xi, omicron, pi, rho, sigma, tau, upsilon, phi, chi, psi and omega. It ought to be fun seeing the reporters trying to spell those. They'll probably eliminate mu, nu, xi, pi, phi, chi and psi. Then what, the Cyrillic alphabet? They call ours the Latin alphabet.

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Knock it off; we don't have the first mess swept up! Six more weeks to recover the bodies from Katrina, probably 2 months for Rita and the Puente Hills Earthquake of 2005 will take until 2006. The bad news is that a lot of the people who live in the area of the Puente Hills Fault are illegal aliens whom no habla inglés. No fair, California is a coast, too and contains >10% of the population of the United States. 33,871,648 of 281,421,906 in the 2000 Census lived in California, 12.04% and with an area of 410,000km² it is the third largest state in the US. If California were an independent nation, it would have between the sixth and ninth largest economy in the world. Who do you think is paying to clean up the Gulf Coast (everyone)? At least the aftershocks are getting smaller, the last one was only about a M5. Puente Hills cracked some stucco and the San Andreas only had weakened buildings to contend with. Is my house leaning more? Darn. I hope they bring us ice, water and MREs, I'm getting tired of pork steak.

You know, I don't think that tent will offer much protection if the Chinese lob a couple of nukes. On the other hand, it won't hurt the house much. I think that once we get it rebuilt, we should sell it and move to anywhere except California."

The American Dream – Chapter 6 – The Rez

There aren't many Indians in Palmdale that I know of. But to the east a little ways is an Indian Museum. Given the choice between a 100-year old bow and my borrowed M1A, I'll take the rifle.

Antelope Valley Indian Museum State Historic Park is California's State Regional Indian Museum representing Great Basin Indian Cultures. The exhibits and interpretive emphasis are on American Indian groups, both aboriginal and contemporary, of the Southwest, Great Basin, and California culture regions, since Antelope Valley was a major prehistoric trade corridor linking all three of these culture regions. The museum contains the combined collections of founder Howard Arden Edwards and subsequent owner Grace Oliver. A number of the cultural materials on display are rare or one-of-a-kind objects.

The museum was originally constructed by homesteader/artist H. Arden Edwards in 1928. The chalet-style structure was built over an entire rock formation of Piute Butte in the Mojave Desert. The unusual folk-art structure is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The museum offers the visitor a unique experience.

Joshua Cottage features a "touch table" room where everyone, regardless of age, can experience food grinding and processing techniques. Or you can learn how earlier Indian groups started fires using sticks or bow drills.

Next to the museum is a self-guided nature trail, a picnic area, and an outdoor ceremonial arena. Occasionally guest Indian groups perform traditional dances and other programs. There is an annual opening event each fall featuring a traditional ground blessing ceremony. There are also Indian artists' demonstration and selling their work, Indian food, and special activities for children. The museum also sponsors periodic educational seminars.

I had a perfectly good title for chapter 5, but now I forget what it was. It was in keeping with the storyline, however. I kept the .375 H&H Magnum next to the front door of my tent in case I had to kill an LAV. A man has to be careful after a big earthquake; the LAVs are out to get you, especially the ones driven by Marines. Or, doesn't the Army have any LAVs? Sure they do:

Where the Soldiers in the first rotation in Iraq were perhaps unprepared for dealing with deadly roadside bombs and ambushes by plainclothes civilians, the Soldiers who took over were able to prepare with the benefit of lessons learned by their comrades in Iraq. Reaching for its yearlong tour in Iraq, in early 2004 the 984th Military Police Company spent more time than usual familiarizing itself with its weapons, vehicles and tactics. Armed with the latest addition to the MP's arsenal of vehicles, the M1117 Guardian Armored Security Vehicle, each team in the 984th carries more firepower than an entire infantry squad. The 984th was the first MP Company on Fort Carson to get the new ASVs, each armed with an MK-19 grenade launcher, a .50-caliber machine gun and a

squad automatic weapon. The Guardian is designed to be able to take a direct hit from an RPG and keep its crew alive. Whether the vehicle will make it through the hit is another story.

In Iraq, an RPG hit one from behind and it pretty much took out the entire engine casing, but there were no deaths, no injuries. With better preparation than their predecessors and a dozen new ASVs, the 984th was better outfitted to take over the task of keeping the peace in Iraq than their compatriot MPs who were already there.

I wouldn't mind having one of those; I wonder where I can borrow one? Maybe I can put Kevlar panels in Sharon's Skylark. It doesn't matter, I don't drive, and all I have to do is protect the passenger compartment. You did notice that we didn't go to Barstow, right? I figured since I told everyone where to get guns, they'd all be gone by the time we got there.

For some, the recent hurricanes are seen as God's warning to repent.

Some preachers have said Katrina was meant to punish New Orleans for being a sin city. In Jerusalem, a prominent rabbi says the hurricanes are meant to punish President Bush. An Islamic Web site describes Katrina's destruction as God's fair punishment for America. And others say it is no more than the natural, historical cycle of weather, that there have always been and always will be clusters of damaging hurricanes.

The same news organization had the following headlines: Rita Rages Ashore and Cheney Going Under the Knife. Hurricanes have no emotion and they call the knife a scalpel. A competitor said Rita Rakes the Gulf and New Orleans Repeat Nightmare. Huh, I thought the hurricane hit western Louisiana. Hey, Ray, are Kathy and you still opposed to repairing the levees? The third guy said, Rita's Rage: Hurricane roars inland fueling fires and floods. Floods are water, right? You use water to put out fires. Sounds ok to me. A more reasonable news organization said: Texas, Louisiana feel effects of Rita and their major competitor said: Rita now a Category 1 hurricane.

An Iraqi judge said on Saturday he had renewed arrest warrants for two British soldiers who were rescued from jail early this week by troops using armor to crash through the prison walls. Uh, right. The British gave up on their Assault Rifle and are probably going to the H&K G36. BTW, the Mk 19 ammo is 40x53mm, the ammo for the M203 is 40x46mm. For all of my talk about firearms, a Kimber is cheaper than a USP Tactical in the .45ACP. Prices: USP Tactical 45 - \$1115, Kimber Custom II Tactical ~\$929, buy American, the Kimber is a highly refined M1911.

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They imposed a curfew on Palmdale after the earthquake, making strategic reallocation very difficult. Chris was pretty good at driving without lights however. We did some of it during the day, but it got to be a problem, too much competition. We finally figured it out; they sent the Deputies to guard the Circuit City stores. Ronald called just to tell me that Ray confiscated the guns in New Orleans. Right, except from the MZBs.

“The situation we’re seeing in New Orleans represents a complete vindication of everything we’ve been saying in defense of the Second Amendment,” said NRA Executive Vice President Wayne LaPierre.

“All throughout history, what you have in the aftermath of disasters like Katrina is mayhem, looting, robbing, raping and killing by the evildoers, along with a complete breakdown of government’s ability to protect people from those who would do them harm,” LaPierre said. “That’s exactly what the Right to Keep and Bear Arms was intended to address. The Second Amendment is the underpinning of citizens’ efforts to stay alive.”

Yet according to The New York Times and other media outlets, New Orleans authorities began seizing firearms from lawful citizens precisely when they needed them the most. “No one will be able to be armed,” said New Orleans Superintendent of Police P. Edwin Compass. “Guns will be taken. Only law enforcement will be allowed to have guns.” All firearms – lawfully owned or not – would be seized, he said.

Ironically, Compass added, “there’s nothing more important than the preservation of human life” – ignoring the reality that the Right to Keep and Bear Arms was the only protection citizens had against violent predators roaming New Orleans.

“When law enforcement isn’t available, Americans turn to the one right that protects all the others – the Right to Keep and Bear Arms,” LaPierre said. “If authorities are denying the Second Amendment rights of lawful citizens – especially during a crisis like this – those authorities should be condemned and their actions immediately reversed.”

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In Texas, you can shoot trespassers and if the LEOs aren’t available, citizens can band together to protect themselves, legally. I’ll bet that scarred the crap out of the gangster’s from New Orleans. In Palmdale, you can have certain approved firearms, but you can’t point them and have to retreat. There’s a big market for throw downs in California. My Sterling .22 is probably worth as much as my Nazi .32, although the California gangster’s prefer 9mm semi-autos. The Sheriff probably thought gangsters stole the guns from the Santa Fe Gun Galleria because the Browning Hi-Powers were gone. Good.

Back at The Rez, we were in good shape; we’d borrowed a little gas to tide us over and a couple of firearms to protect our gas. We’d also borrowed some generators so we had something to use the gas in. We even shopped Smart and Final Iris because they were the only store that carried Frijoles del Norte in 10-pound bags. Loaded up on soap and water while we were at it. We didn’t have the problem with filthy water they had in New Orleans, all we had was broken pipes. I figure maybe by late 2006 for running water and sewer. We got natural gas now – we’re eating beans. Might as well buy the Minute Rice in the 5 pound box, it’s easier to get perfect rice.

Tried to file an insurance claim on the house, but I couldn't find my policy. I wasn't worried because the Farmers agent had it all in his files, if he wasn't in New Orleans or Port Arthur. State Farm carried 40% of the insurance for New Orleans, Farmers had < 10%. If a levee breaks and floods your house is that hurricane damage or flood damage? Attorneys in Louisiana think it's hurricane damage. They're suing.

One attorney they interviewed had set up an 800 number just to sign up people. His theory was that if you took the insurance company to court, they paid. Remember me being on a jury in an auto accident case? Gave the guy a case of JD? The defendant's insurance company was State Farm. They employ many attorneys. The defendant's attorney thanked me for controlling the amount of the award. She said the plaintiff's attorney didn't know the ground rules; you never want an accountant on a damage case unless you're the defendant. I asked why and she said accountants were cheap.

You can run, but you can't hide, the earthquake faults will follow you all the way to Utah. I hope they didn't build a nuclear reactor in Utah on a fault. In California, you don't have a choice; the entire state is a fault. The government may approve the first new nuclear reactors in 30 years. Secretary of Energy Samuel Bodman released the following statement regarding today's announcement by the NuStart Consortium on the selection of two sites for Advanced Nuclear Plant Licenses:

"Today's announcement is a major step in the right direction. As America's energy needs continue to grow with our economy, further building our nuclear infrastructure will ensure that we can generate large amounts of reliable, affordable, emissions-free power. The companies of the NuStart Consortium are to be congratulated for their efforts; they are truly the trailblazers for 21st century power generation in America."

NuStart Energy Development LLC will apply for licenses to build the nation's first new nuclear power plants in 30 years at sites in Alabama and Mississippi.

The sites are Grand Gulf Nuclear Station, owned by an Entergy Corp. subsidiary, near Port Gibson, Miss., and Bellefonte Nuclear Plant, owned by the Tennessee Valley Authority, near Scottsboro, Ala. Neither Port Gibson nor Scottsboro are on the Gulf Coast. They are going to use one GE reactor and one Westinghouse reactor and see which one melts down first.

About 400,000 people in the Antelope Valley lost electricity, water, sewer and natural gas from the earthquake. We kept the windows in the tent open; it doesn't rain a lot in Palmdale.

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The downside of our successful strategic reallocations was that we had enough and nobody else had much of anything. I reckon they didn't like beans. The problem with having lights was that everyone saw you all lighted up and wanted to know why you had lights and they didn't. They didn't ask about the gas. Chris and I explained that we had

lights because we had generators and had a generator even before the earthquake in Palmdale. That's all true. Never lie, you'll get caught and get a boarding pass marked down. Apparently Johnny got the glove on. The blonde got a boarding pass marked up because God realized that she didn't know any better. She couldn't count to 3 because she only had 2 hands.

"We'd better be careful, someone is going to try and steal our generators."

"Pull your pickup and trailer across the front of the housing tract to block them."

"I'm not going to do that, someone might shoot my truck."

"You'd rather have them shoot you?"

"I think they ought to confiscate all of the guns."

"Take me to the Antelope Valley Indian Museum State Historic Park and I'll steal a bow and some arrows."

"Why, you have guns, you stole a lot."

"I borrowed them, Chris, it isn't the same. They can have them back when I'm done with them."

"When will that be?"

"In the year 2525, unless I'm still alive. Don't worry about it, as soon as we settle up on the house, we're moving to Sedona, Arizona. Sedona was voted the most beautiful place in America."

"By, whom?"

"USA Weekend's Travel Report. They said, 'Ever since the early days of movies, when Hollywood has wanted to show the unique beauty of the West, it has gone to Sedona, a place that looks like nowhere else. Beginning with *The Call of the Canyon* in 1923, some hundred movies and TV shows have been filmed in and around town. We fell under Sedona's spell, too, and while debating our No. 1 spot kept returning to it for the same reasons Hollywood does: The area's telegenic canyons, wind-shaped buttes and dramatic sandstone towers embody the rugged character of the West – and the central place that character holds in our national identity. There's a timelessness about these ancient rocks that fires the imagination of all who encounter them. Some 11,000 years before film cameras discovered Sedona, American Indians settled the area.

Homesteaders, artists and, most recently, New Age spiritualists have followed. Many cultures and agendas abound, but there's really only one attraction: the sheer, exuberant beauty of the place. People come for inspiration and renewal, tawny cliffs rising from

the buff desert floor, wind singing through box canyons, and sunsets that seem to cause the ancient buttes and spires to glow from within.”

“Are you going to be able to find land there?”

“Probably not, we’ll say in a trailer park and be trailer trash. Saw a mobile home I liked, 18’x80’, built by Oak Creek Homes. The perfect home would have one very nice master bedroom and a couple of smaller bedrooms that didn’t want to make company stay for more than a night or two. We talked about a home with 2 master bedrooms, but company would move in and not want to move out.”

What’s wrong with that?”

“Nothing. Provided he has a Hummer H-1 Alpha and a large gun safe.”

“What kind of guns?”

“If he had a HK21E 7.62mmx51-caliber general-purpose machinegun, it would be a good start. A couple of Barrett M82A1Ms wouldn’t hurt. Anything very good and highly reliable semi auto in 7.62, preferably made by or licensed by H&K, the best of the best, you know.”

“Why do you like German guns?”

“Ott is German, I think.”

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Has anyone noticed the difference between the local Sheriff’s and the Chief of Police of New Orleans? The Sheriff’s don’t seem to cotton to looting. Despite eyewitness statements to the contrary, the New Orleans Chief of Police denies it was even possible that a few of his officer’s did any looting. I know, all of the witnesses are lying and those weren’t really NOPD uniforms, they just looked like them. Fake badges and guns, too. I’m not angry, and I won’t get angry so long as the Sheriff in Palmdale does his strategic reallocations someplace other than where we’re doing ours. The only problem with those strategically reallocated generators is they’re so darned noisy. We should have strategically reallocated something quieter. Gas was smarter than diesel because diesel costs more than gas, unless you strategically reallocate it.

Did I miss anyone? I feel really, really bad if I didn’t give everyone a hard time. The bad news is my next story won’t have chapter titles. The good news is this one is over.

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